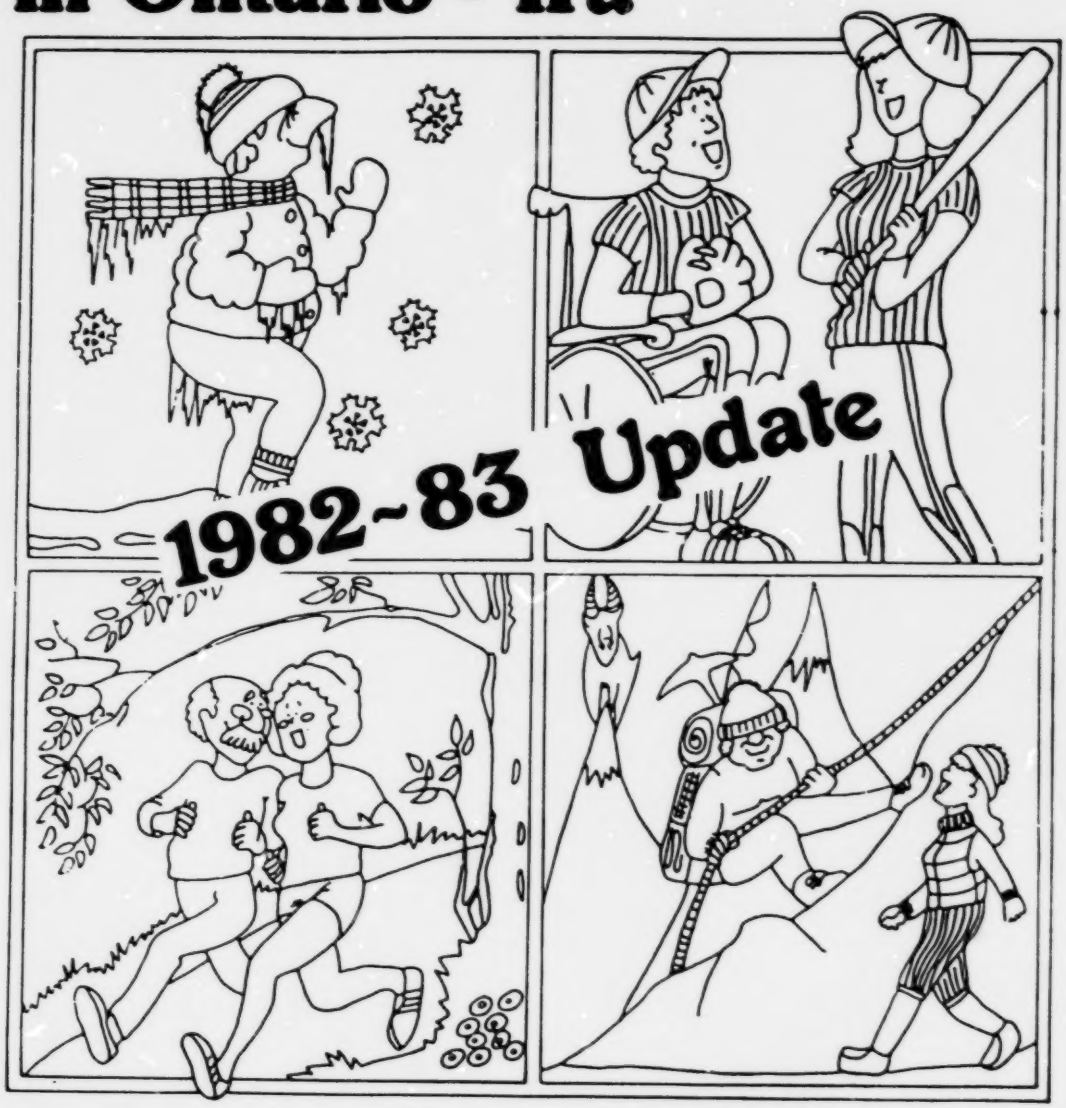
Physical Activity Patterns in Ontario - IIa



1982-83 Update

A Research Report from the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation

Fitness Ontario

Ontario

Ministry of Tourism and Recreation

Hon. Reuben C. Baetz
Minister

Summary Of Major Findings And Implications

Introduction

Interest and participation in physical activity continues to be widespread throughout Ontario in the early 1980's.

The Ministry of Tourism & Recreation has been monitoring these patterns for more than five years via twice yearly surveys. This is the only long-term study of its kind in Canada and its findings are used to guide the marketing and promotion of fitness across the province.

The Ministry's research report, Physical Activity Patterns in Ontario - II, documented the trends and patterns on how active Ontario's adults were during the period 1978-1981. This update report contains the findings from the four most recent surveys conducted during 1982 and 1983.

PARTICIPATION & FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITY

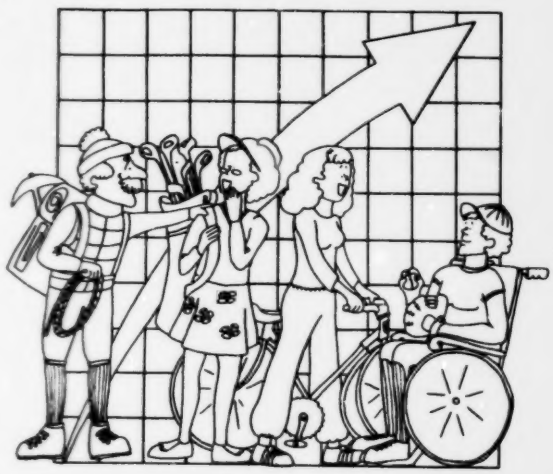
Briefly, participation and frequency of activity have continued at the same high levels as seen in 1981. This is somewhat surprising given the recent economic recession and the possibility that many people's energies were focussed on employment and their own financial security.

- Over 60% of Ontario's adults are active at least once a week in the late spring while about 55% are active in November.
- There has not been a significant increase in frequency of participation during the period 1981 - 1983

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

There have been no significant changes in frequency of participation in the most popular activities over the last two years.

- Walking remains the most popular activity in both spring and fall. Other popular year-round activities are swimming/scuba and calisthenics.
- Jogging/running and skating/hockey are popular in the fall, while bicycling is popular in the spring.



Fitness participation has increased.

DEGREE OF ACTIVITY

The degree of activity of Ontario's adults in terms of energy expended is at the same level as was seen previously.

- Almost 30% of adults expend a high degree of energy in the spring, while about 20% do so in the fall.

AGE & SEX DIFFERENCES

Young adults remain more active than older adults. In general participation decreases with increasing age.

About as many women are active as are men but more men expend high levels of energy than do women. This is particularly true in the fall when relatively few women expend high levels of energy. In the spring, however, women are catching up quickly.

COMMUNITY SIZE DIFFERENCES

Until 1981, the participation patterns of people living in communities of various sizes was quite consistent.

- Many more adults in large urban centres and small cities were active than were those in rural areas.

However, in 1983, there was a dramatic decline in the number of adults living in small cities who were active in the fall.

WHERE PEOPLE PARTICIPATE

Periodically, new information is collected on a one time basis. In Nov. 1982, people were asked where they participated. While where they exercise depends on what they are doing, in general:

- Over one third participate outside using no special facility.
- About one quarter (23%) participated in public, non-profit recreational facilities, 20% in commercial/private facilities or clubs, 18% at home and 4% at work.

People active only at certain times of the year should be encouraged to be active year-round.

General Implications

THE UNTAPPED MARKET

While interest and participation in physical activity remain widespread throughout Ontario, there is still a market that remains untapped.

The data indicate that about 45% of Ontario's adults are active three times a week or more (the recommended frequency) in the spring and 35% in the fall. This means that over half are active less frequently, or not at all. The challenge for fitness professionals in the 1980's is to increase people's frequency of activity significantly.

REGULAR YEAR-ROUND ACTIVITY

There is a substantial seasonal pattern to people's activity patterns. Fewer adults are active in the fall. Fitness professionals should encourage all adults to maintain regular activity on a year-round basis.

In addition, some people who start regular activity don't always continue. Strategies should be used to keep people active when their interest wanes or when a seasonal activity ends. (See the Ministry's recent publication, STICKING WITH FITNESS: What To Do About the Adherence Problem in Fitness Programs, for some practical tips.)

RENEWED INTEREST

If the lack of increase in participation during the last two years was affected by the economic recession, we could see an increased demand for programs, facilities and information as the economy recovers and as people have more disposable income and time available.

DIFFERENT NEEDS - DIFFERENT STRATEGIES

People of different ages have different interests, needs, and patterns of participating. Therefore, professionals must approach these groups differently.

Lack of time is often a problem for adults in their mid years. This must be taken into consideration in planning programs.

Women show greater seasonal variation than do men. Women could be encouraged to become active more consistently and with a higher degree of energy expenditure.

GREATER OPPORTUNITIES

Since participation in smaller communities is lower than that in larger ones, provision of greater opportunities could encourage more people to become active.

Major Findings

Frequency of Participation

Participation in terms of the percentage of Ontario's adults who are active (at least once a week) increased during the period 1978 - 1981. Since then, it has remained at the same high level. No further increase was seen the the last two years - possibly because people had less disposable income and less time available during the recent economic recession.

Chart 2 shows this trend for the past five years (top curve). Also shown are the percentage of adults active three or more times a week, and the percentage active once or twice a week.

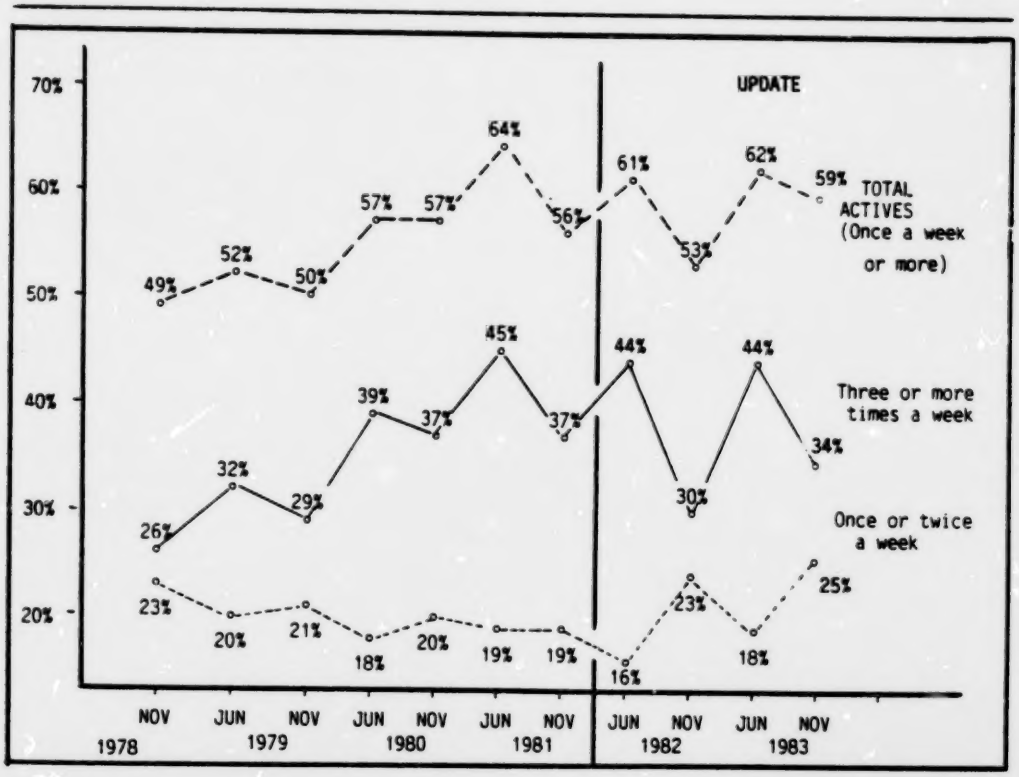
The seasonal variations are quite evident. More people tend to be active in the spring than in the fall.

Types of Activity

Walking remains the most popular activity in both the spring and fall. Other activities, because of their seasonal nature, show a different pattern. Calisthenics, jogging/running, skating/hockey and swimming/scuba are popular in the fall, while swimming/scuba, bicycling, and calisthenics are popular in the spring. There have been no significant changes since 1981.

* This update report follows the outline and format of previously published report, Physical Activity Patterns in Ontario - II. The chart numbers used here refer to those in that report.

CHART 2
FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITY



Degree of Activity

How often people participate and what activities they engage in show only part of the picture. How long they exercise and with what intensity are equally as important. We can estimate a person's degree of activity in terms of the amount of energy they expend each month by combining these four aspects into a total measure.

Chart 5 shows the percentage of people expending high levels of energy for the last eight survey periods.

The number of adults in Ontario expending high degrees of energy in their physical activities has increased to about 30% of the population in the spring, while 20% are high expenders in November. There is a definite difference between the spring and fall periods.

The percentage increased quite dramatically until June 1981, and then appears to have levelled off.

While a substantial number of people participate quite actively, there are still a large number of participants who do not expend high degrees of energy.

CHART 5

DEGREE OF ACTIVITY

UPDATE

	METS/MONTH	1980 JUN	1980 NOV	1981 JUN	1981 NOV	1982 JUN	1982 NOV	1983 JUN	1983 NOV
Non-Participants	0	36%	37%	31%	39%	35%	43%	33%	44%
Low	1 - 2999	30%	28%	24%	21%	20%	21%	21%	21%
Medium	3000 - 6499	20%	18%	17%	18%	17%	16%	17%	15%
High	6500 & over	14%	17%	28%	22%	28%	20%	29%	20%
		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Characteristics of Participants

Differences for Men & Women

During the period 1982 - 1983, there were no large differences in frequency of activity between men & women, as shown in Chart 9.

There were, however, some differences in the degree of activity in terms of energy expended as shown in chart 8a. More men expend high levels of energy than do women - particularly in the fall. At least in the spring, however, women are rapidly catching up. Encouraging women to expend higher levels of energy in the fall (and presumably the winter) is an area requiring attention by fitness professionals.

Frequency of participation for women in fitness activities has been increasing.

CHART 9

Percent Active (at least once a week) by Sex

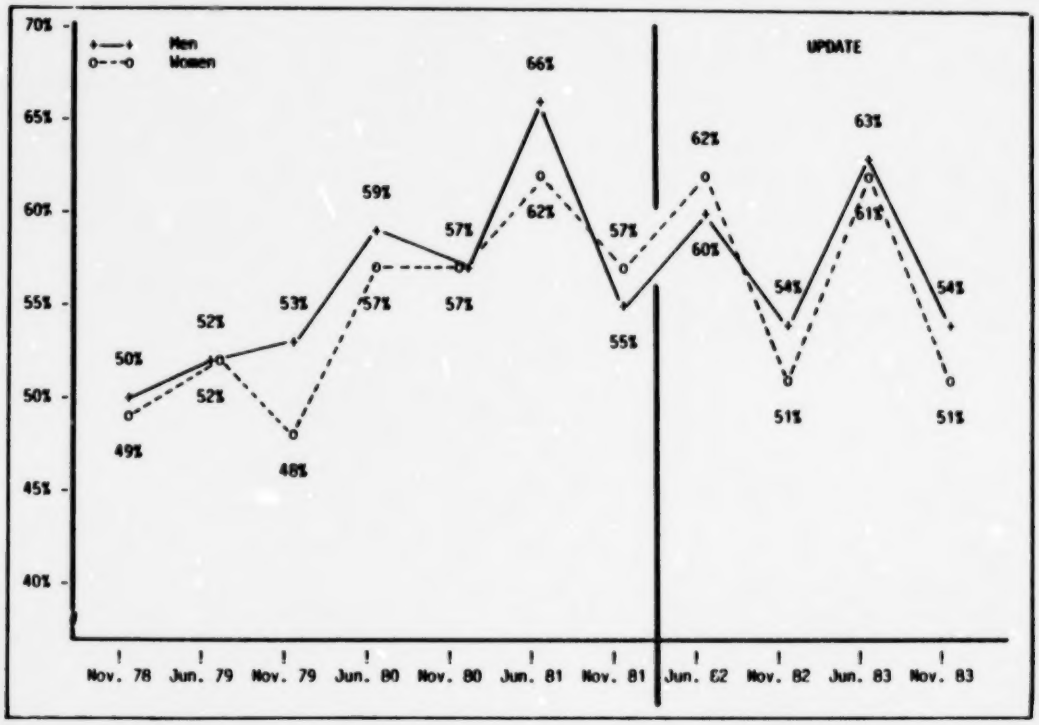
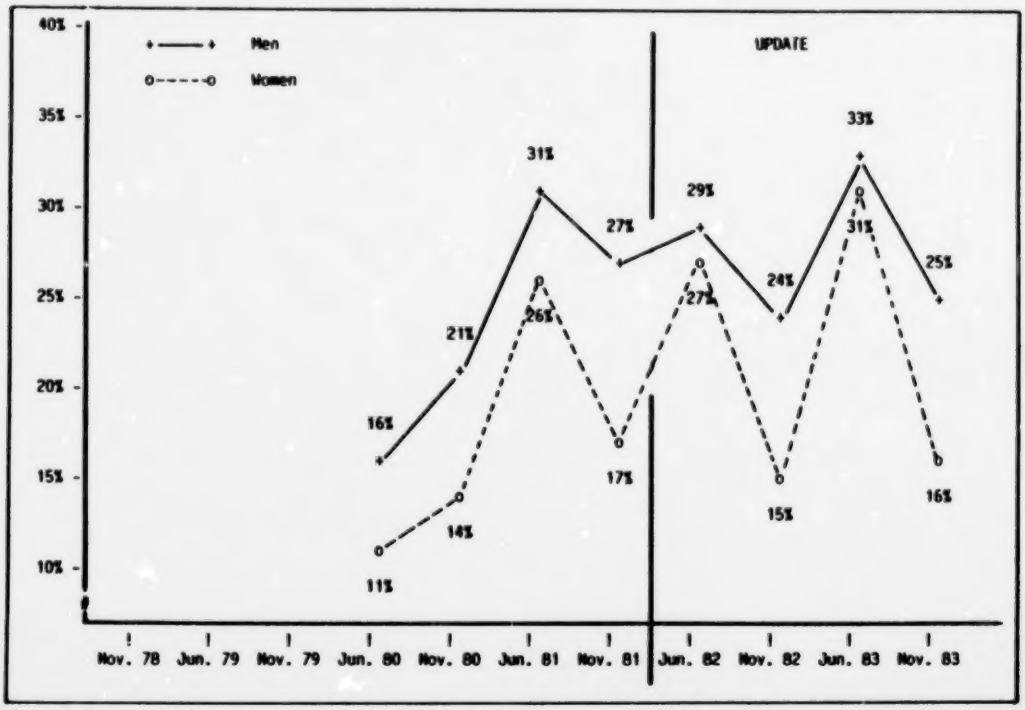


CHART 8a

Degree of Activity by Sex

HIGH Energy Expenditure



Participation by Age

Younger adults tend to be active more frequently than do older adults. This pattern has continued during the last two years as seen in Chart 13.

As well, more younger adults expend high degrees of energy than do older adults. The number of young adults 18 - 29 doing so has been increasing steadily in both the spring and fall. The number of adults between the ages 30 - 49 who expend high degrees of energy has decreased in the last two years.

CHART 13

PERCENT ACTIVE (at least once a week) BY AGE GROUP

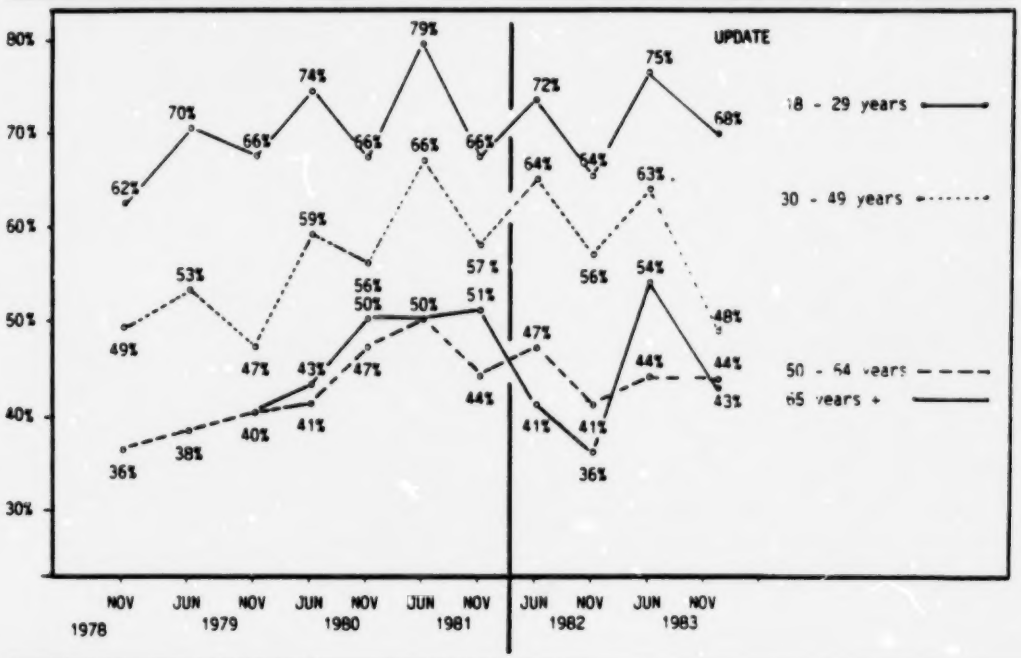
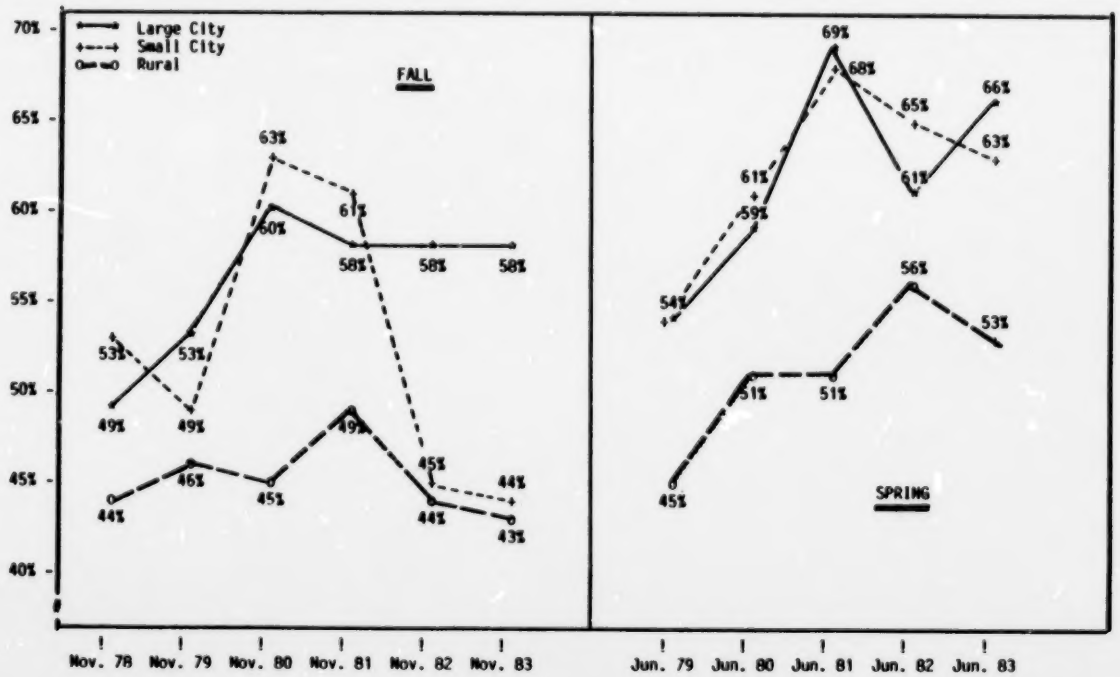


CHART 18A

Percent Active (at least once a week) for Each Community Size



Community Size Difference

Data collected during the period 1978 - 1981 showed that there were more active people living in large and small cities than there were living in rural areas. Basically, this trend has continued to the present. However there has been a substantial reduction in the number of adults living in small cities who are active in the fall.

Where People Participate

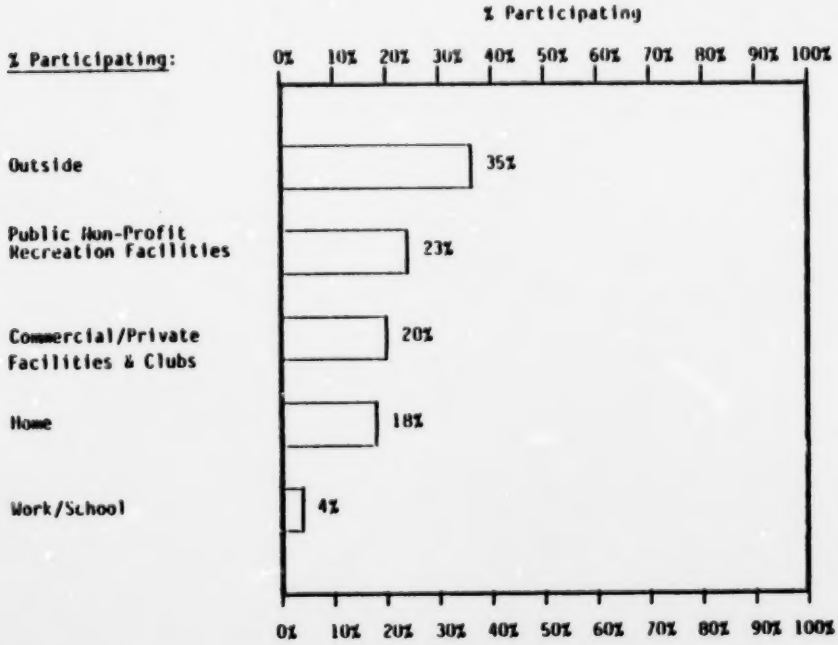
During the November 1982 survey, people were asked where they participated for each of their activities.

Looking across all activities, most people participated "outside, using no special facility," as shown in Chart 23.

Where people participate depends on the activity in which they engage. For example, 65% of joggers/runners do so outside in November, and for those engaging in calisthenics, 51% do so at home, 26% in private or commercial clubs, and 20% in public recreation facilities.

Chart 23

Where Activity Takes Place November 1982



Implications

Interest and participation in fitness boomed in the late 1960's and early 1970's. In the late 1970's as we have seen by monitoring the physical activity patterns of Ontario's adults, participation increased, but much less dramatically. Over the last two years (1982-1983), the interest has remained high, but the increases observed up until 1981, have not continued. In the most recent (Nov. 1983) survey, there was a slight indication that the trend may be increasing. Only future monitoring will tell.

The challenge for fitness professionals in the 1980's is to continue to help more people become active on a regular basis and to encourage those who are moderately active to become more active.

The information provided by the twice-yearly surveys can help those involved in the planning, marketing and promotion of fitness meet this challenge.

More specific information can be obtained from:

Burt Perrin
Research, Evaluation & Planning Co-ordinator,

Sports & Fitness Branch
Ministry of Tourism & Recreation
77 Bloor Street West
TORONTO, Ontario
M7A 2R9 (416) 965-3124

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Fitness Ontario

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POOR

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